



TESTIMONY OF NORTHWESTERN AHEC SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 10, 2016

*H.B. No. 5044 - An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year
Ending June 30, 2017.*

Northwestern Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Inc. appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **H.B. No. 5044- An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017**. Northwestern AHEC **proposes** that funding for the CT AHEC Network be **maintained** at **\$400,643** with no further reductions. The AHEC Network is part of a **federally matched initiative** which is based at the University of Connecticut Health Center and is implemented through four regional centers located in the Willimantic, Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport areas. The four centers enable the AHEC Program to carry out local programs with great efficiency. As a statewide program, it functions locally to provide high quality, efficient, effective and flexible services that meet local needs. CT AHEC also assures that residents have access to critical resources and programs that are essential in developing a healthcare workforce which is cost effective, culturally competent, inter-professional and responsive to the healthcare needs of the state. Reducing or eliminating any funds will negatively impact services offered locally, regionally, and statewide.

Regional Reach

Northwestern AHEC Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit, established in 1998, aims to *enhance access to quality health care, particularly primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of health care professionals through community/academic educational partnerships*. NWAHEC **primarily serves over 2,500 rural and urban** participants a year with low socioeconomically status including veterans, disadvantaged youth, first generation college students and people with mental illness. NWAHEC's geographic reach for regional programming are **Greater Waterbury, Greater Danbury and Litchfield County**.

Return on Investment

Northwestern AHEC's 2016 core funding comes from state appropriated funds complimented with a federal match in the amount of \$240,986. To expand our impact, Northwestern AHEC continuously seeks additional financial resources from a variety of sources. **In 2016 Northwestern AHEC leveraged an additional \$572,000 to support operations amounting to a 237% return on investment of AHEC state and federal funds. In other words, for every state and federal AHEC dollar invested, NWAHEC leveraged \$2.37 to expand the AHEC investment's impact on local communities.**

Northwestern AHEC's Key Initiatives

- Health Career Pipeline Programs
 - Youth Health Service Corps
 - Collegiate Health Service Corps
- AmeriCorps
- Rural Physician recruitment and Retention
- Mental Health First Aid
- Community Health Worker
- Access Health CT Education and Enrollment
- CEU/CMW Course Offerings



AHEC Statewide Reach

For the past 18 years the Connecticut AHEC Network and its the four regional Centers have successfully leveraged collaboration and partnerships with key stakeholders with a focus on Connecticut’s health care workforce. We have been dedicated and committed to reducing and eliminating health disparities by collaborating and creating partnerships with organizations that aim to improve healthcare access both on a national and statewide level. The capacity by which AHEC has collaborated has been either in a lead role or has contributed in leadership Advising, Officer, Co-Chair, or general member of core collaborative groups both regionally and statewide.

AHEC’s **mission and goals** directly support healthcare workforce development in the state:

- Recruiting underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students into the health professions.
- Partnering with community organizations to address local health issues.
- Providing continuing education that improves the care received by vulnerable populations.
- Providing outreach to underserved communities
- Developing and supporting community based inter-professional training opportunities for health professions and pre-health professions students.

The AHEC Network engages more than 7,000 learners annually from 30+ secondary schools, 9 colleges/universities and 10 health professional schools state-wide. Through its **on-line health careers manual HOT Guide** – Health Occupations and Technology Careers (www.healthcareersinct.com), AHEC provides current and accurate information on CT based health professions programs, admissions prerequisites, training, credentialing and roles of over 85 health careers to students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, librarians more than 1 million times each year. AHEC provides continuing education for the state’s healthcare professionals through a variety of mediums and topics including: chronic disease management, immunization and public health, cultural competence, utilization of medical interpreters and Community Health Workers, etc. Table 1 lists programs & technical support that are currently provided within the organization’s objectives.

Table 1: Northwestern AHEC Programs and Technical Support

Objective	Focus /# of Learners Engaged Annually	Programs
Diversity	Health Profession Recruitment (K-12 & Adult Learners)/	Summer Camps, After -School Enrichment, Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA), Health Promotion, Upward Bound/Gear-Up TRIO programs, Medical Reserve Corps “Be Fit”, Tobacco/Smoking Prevention Program “TATU” Teens Against Tobacco Use, Middle School Health Careers Exploration Program, Youth Health Service Corps, Collegiate Health Service Corps, Internships, Public Health Ambassadors, AmeriCorps, Community Health Worker training programs, College & Careers Preparation Workshops, Practical Health Skills, Cultural Competency.
Diversity/ Distribution	Clinical Training of Health Profession Students	Rural Practitioner Recruitment, Migrant Farm Worker Clinic, CT Mission of Mercy Dental Clinic, National Primary Care Week Community Clinics, Student Continuity Practice, Multidisciplinary Ambulatory Experience (MAX), 3 rd &4 th Year Dental Community Based Clinics, Residency Training.



Distribution/ Quality	Educational Support and Technical Assistance for Public Health and Health Care Providers	Mental Health First Aid, Veterans' Mental Health, Continuing Medical Education, PCCAMP (Primary Care Career Advising and Mentoring Program), CT Public Health Association Annual Meeting, National Health Service Corps initiatives.
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On a national level the CT AHEC Networks have collaborations with National Health Service Corps, National Association of Medical Minority Educators, National Rural Health Association, National Health Service Corps, National Student Clearing House, Veterans Mental Health Initiative, and many others. Over the years, the Connecticut AHEC network has collaborated with over 290 federal, state and community partners **Table 2** though not exclusive, illustrates an example of community based partners of whom we worked with over the years. Other partnerships have included higher educational institutions where programs such as the Collegiate Health Service Programs (CHSC), Inter-professional Education, and Continuing Education trainings that promotes workforce development among interpreters. See **Table 3**.

Table 2. CTAHEC Network Collaborative Community Partners

CT Allied Health Workforce Board	Connecticut Commission on Community Service
CT Center for Primary Care	State Office of Rural Health
Community Health Center Association of CT	Institute for Community Research
CT Department of Public Health	Local Departments of Health
CT Hospital Association	Wheeler Clinic/CT Clearinghouse
CT State Dental Association	ProHealth Physicians
Veterans' Health Administration	CT Public Health Association
Regional Education Resource Centers (RESC)	

Table 3. Institutional Partners

Naugatuck Valley Community College	University of Bridgeport
Western Connecticut State University	University of Connecticut (various campuses)
Quinnipiac University School of Medicine	University of Hartford
Housatonic Community College	University of St. Joseph's College
Quinnipiac University Physician Assistant Program	Southern Connecticut State University
Quinebaug Valley Community College	Wesleyan College
Southern Connecticut State University	Trinity College

Further losses of state support will jeopardize our federal match along with other financial resources that aid with sustaining our organization. In an era of healthcare transformation, **maintaining the \$400,643 AHEC line item and the UCONN School of Medicine AHEC funding in the amount \$381,000 in the 2017**



state budget is critical to assure that the CT AHEC Network will be there to deliver its unique services and programs to our residents as we create the diverse, well trained and cost effective interprofessional healthcare workforce that Connecticut requires and deserves.

Thank you for your supporting the Connecticut AHEC network.

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